

STATEMENT OF PAUL HOFFMAN, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR FISH AND WILDLIFE AND PARKS, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, RECREATION, AND PUBLIC LANDS OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES, CONCERNING S. 1576, TO REVISE THE BOUNDARY OF HARPERS FERRY NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

June 15, 2004

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the Department of the Interior on S. 1576, a bill to provide for additional lands to be included within the boundary of Harpers Ferry National Historical Park in the state of West Virginia. This bill passed the Senate on May 19.

The Department supports enactment of this legislation if amended in accordance with this statement. S. 1576 would authorize the Secretary of the Interior to expand the boundary of Harpers Ferry National Historical Park to include lands that are critical to preserving resources that tell the stories there. The Department recommends that the legislation be amended to include in the boundary only the transfer of lands from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Appalachian National Scenic Trail to Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, and the donation of 177 acres of private lands from the Civil War Preservation Trust. The Department recognizes the importance of including in the boundary the remaining private lands, but we recommend that the committee defer action on authorizing the acquisition of these lands during the remainder of the 108th Congress. To meet the President's Initiative to eliminate the deferred maintenance backlog, we need to continue to focus our resources on caring for existing areas in the National Park System.

Located at the confluence of the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers, Harpers Ferry has a history that has few parallels in the American drama. The park commemorates a diverse number of people and events, decisions, and actions that influenced the course of our nation's history over 230 years. In 1944, Congress established Harpers Ferry as "a public national memorial commemorating the historical events that occurred at or near Harpers Ferry."

This bill would add nine parcels of land to the boundary of the park to provide permanent protection of resources that are integral in commemorating historical events that occurred at Harpers Ferry. These include properties on School House Ridge, which was the position of Confederate General Stonewall Jackson during the strategic battle for Harpers Ferry in 1862; the Werner tract, which protects the southern viewshed of the park; a portion of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail that contains Civil War campgrounds; several small properties that protect park viewsheds between Bolivar Heights and the Murphy Farm; and Potoma Wayside that protects part of the view Thomas Jefferson described in his Journals on the State of Virginia as "stupendous" and "worth a trip across the Atlantic." The wayside is also used as the take-out for whitewater rafting companies and paddlers using the Shenandoah and Potomac rivers near Harpers Ferry.

In 2001, at the direction of Congress, the National Park Service undertook extensive outreach efforts and public meetings in and around Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, to explain the options for expanding the boundary of Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. These options were drawn from 12 years of public debate centered on the expansion of the park and were incorporated into documents that were widely disseminated to the public.

During the 2001 public outreach efforts, Harpers Ferry National Historical Park worked with the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, private non-profit organizations, conservation organizations, state and local leaders, tourism and business interests, land developers, private landowners, and the public. Four public meetings were held throughout Jefferson County, West Virginia, and one or more meetings were held with each private landowner identified in the report. The National Park Service transmitted the results of the outreach efforts to Congress in a report titled “Report to the Senate Appropriations Committee of the United States Congress on the Public Outreach Program at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, to Explain the Options to Expand the Park’s Boundary and Determine if there is a Public Consensus for Expansion” (September 2002). The report concluded that there exists an overwhelming public consensus (94 percent) for expansion of the park. Support for the expansion is equally strong among outreach participants at the local, regional and national levels.

The land in the proposed park expansion is largely federal. Lands held by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, which the park currently manages through agreements, would be transferred to the Harpers Ferry National Historical Park to be administered directly. The total federal acreage in the proposed legislation is 772 acres. There are also 368 acres of private land in the bill’s proposed park expansion that the Secretary of the Interior would be authorized to acquire from willing sellers. The Civil War Preservation Trust owns 177 acres, which they want to donate to the Park, with the remaining 191 acres split among six individual owners. For the National Park Service to acquire these lands, the current park

acreage ceiling of 2,505 acres needs to be increased to 3,745 acres, which includes a margin of 100 acres within the new ceiling for survey and acquisition corrections.

No appraisals have been done on the properties included in the proposed park expansion; however, based on recent comparable sales of property adjacent to the park, the National Park Service believes that the land acquisition costs would total approximately \$3.7 million to acquire all 191 acres of private land. With our proposed amendment, land acquisition costs would be negligible since the remaining lands would be acquired through donation or transfer.

The land in the proposed expansion is mainly forest or agricultural farmland that contains a few structures. The National Park Service proposes to manage the forested lands as protected viewsheds, and the agricultural lands under the park's agricultural leasing program with an overlay of public trails and interpretive exhibits for public use and enjoyment. We originally estimated development costs to be less than \$500,000 including projects such as building small parking areas, restoring battlefields, developing trails, and creating exhibits. We also had estimated operational costs to administer all the land would add \$150,000 annually to Harpers Ferry's \$5.7 million dollar operational costs, an increase of less than one percent.

With our proposed amendment, development costs would be reduced to approximately \$350,000 and operational costs would be reduced to approximately \$100,000.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my prepared statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or members of the committee may have.